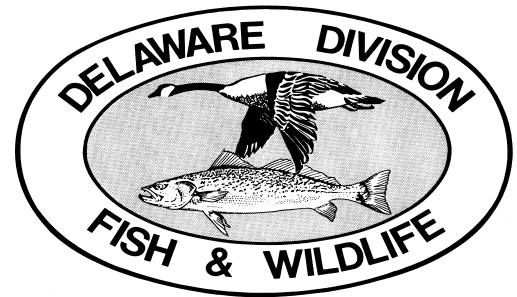


# Tournament News



## 100 Years of Fish & Wildlife Conservation

As you will see in the 2011 Fishing Guide, the first Game & Fish Commissioners were appointed in 1911 making this year our 100th Anniversary. It is interesting to read through some of the historical information about the early Board of Game and Fish Commissioners [available online: <http://www.fw.delaware.gov/Pages/More.aspx>, click on *History of Game & Fish*]. In 1915, a fishing license cost \$3 while a resident hunting license was only \$1. Several times during the early years (1919, 1936), flooding washed fish downstream from ponds into spillpools and streams where they were collected by wardens and moved back into the ponds before spawning season as a service to anglers.

In the 1924 report of the Board, it was stated that "The Delaware ponds are particularly noted for the excellence of our largemouth bass fishing." That year, more non-resident fishing licenses were sold than resident licenses. An Act increasing the fee for a non-resident license from \$3.50 to \$5 soon followed. In 1936, the Abandoned Lake Program was started with agreements between property owners of 13 sites.

The Board arranged a fishing contest for fish taken from Delaware waters in 1938 to increase interest in fresh and saltwater angling. Sworn affidavits and a photo of the fish was required for each entry. Prizes for the largest largemouth bass and "pike" were \$25, with \$10 for the largest crappie—a lot of money in those days. See some of the photos in the historical photo collage in the Fishing Guide.

Four technicians were hired in 1950 to survey freshwater ponds in Delaware. Jay Harmic's publication "Fresh Water Fisheries Survey" in 1952 was the first of a series of publications on the early scientific work by the Commission's biologists. In 1954, mention was made of a marine fishing license in the near future. How many decades did that take? Check out the full history on the Division's website above for more.

In 1974, The state-owned ponds were surveyed again, repeating what Jay Harmic had done 20+ years before including bottom contours in 1974 and 1975. Even by then, major changes had taken place. Many ponds were already surrounded by residential areas, subject to removal of shoreline vegetation and run-off following storm events. One shoreline resident said that he had lived adjacent to a pond for 40 years and noticed that a rainfall event affected the pond much more quickly than when he first moved there. He reported that muddy water began flowing through the pond during a rain event whereas years before it might take more than a day to see any effect from a storm. This undoubtedly resulted in silt buildup on pond bottoms and filling in ponds.

We are in the process of updating depth data and redoing those old maps. Some will be available in the online "Public Ponds" publication as soon as this spring. The remainder should be available within two years. Check back periodically for updates to that publication. The new maps will be enhanced with weed bed locations just for anglers. Let Jared Jacobini (see contact info on top right) know how you like them and if any other improvements can be made.

## Spring 2011

### Telephone numbers of Interest

For tournament reports:

- Cathy Martin, 302-735-8658 (New number); [catherine.martin@state.de.us](mailto:catherine.martin@state.de.us)
- Jared Jacobini, 302-735-8661 (New number); [jared.jacobini@state.de.us](mailto:jared.jacobini@state.de.us)
- For tournament permits: Carol Gondeck, 302-739-9913
- New Fish Tag Hotline: 302-653-2887, leave name & phone no.

Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Agents:

New Castle & Kent Counties:

302-739-6139

Sussex County: 302-855-1901

Report Violations: 302-739-4580

Or 1-800-523-3336

**24-hour Enforcement Number**  
for Environmental Complaints

1-800-662-8802

**Operation Game Theft :**

1-800-292-3030

Permit applications:

[www.fw.delaware.gov/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

Click on Fisheries, Go to Recreational Fishing, at top of page—App. for fishing events; under bass, see *Tournament report form* or *tag return forms*.

[www.fw.delaware.gov](http://www.fw.delaware.gov)

## Recreational Logbook available for anglers, crabbers, & clammers

The Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) created an electronic logbook for use by all anglers who fish in Delaware waters.

This logbook will keep tally of all your fishing trips and catch for you. You can retrieve reports about what species of fish you caught for the year, how many you kept and released, where you fished, what gears you used, etc. You can even record your shellfish catches if you happen to be a recreational crabber or clammer.

For many years we've relied on a federal survey to shed light on marine recreational catches and fish sizes in Delaware. That survey provides a great deal of information, but we still lack information about many aspects of our recreational fishery... such as sizes of released fish, or basic information about less popular game fishes, or fishes caught at night.

Anglers can use the electronic logbook for free, and enjoy its features, while at the same time help the Division better understand what's 'really' going on out there with our recreational species.

Our aim for the electronic logbook is to provide a useful, interesting tool for our anglers, crabbers, and clammers, while enabling us to improve fishing for all Delaware anglers.

This is a work in progress so if you have suggestions for improvements, contact me.

Simply go to the site, create a login name, then follow the instructions to record your trip.

[http://warsaw-grouper.accsp.org:7777/pls/htmldb\\_safis/f?p=SAFIS:1::DELOGBOOK](http://warsaw-grouper.accsp.org:7777/pls/htmldb_safis/f?p=SAFIS:1::DELOGBOOK)

The freshwater species you can enter are:

Largemouth bass  
Smallmouth bass  
Channel catfish

Yellow perch  
White perch  
Striped bass

Enjoy!

Rich Wong, Biometrician

[richard.wong@state.de.us](mailto:richard.wong@state.de.us)



Jordy Zimmerman with a nice bass to enter into the logbook program.

## Tournament Reports—2010

The 2010 summary of bass fishing tournaments in Delaware waters has been completed. Organization contacts will receive a copy with their 2011 tournament angling packet.

A decline of tournament angling effort was noted but much of that was due to the fact that over half of the scheduled tournaments did not have a report submitted for tabulation. 2010 marked the lowest number of reports received (58) since 1995.

A total of 7,428 tournament angling hours were reported with the majority (4,703 hours) on the Nanticoke. Overall bass catch per hour was 0.26 fish including ponds & the Nanticoke. Annual immediate mortality was 1 percent or 20 bass of the 1,988 caught and weighed in.

## Invasive Species: Snakehead Update

The collection of a large northern snakehead in Broad Creek near Laurel last fall (see photo below) during electrofishing was an unwelcome surprise. The nearly six-pound fish was hanging in some woody structure in shallow waters at the mouth of the stream coming from Horseys Pond.

Subsequent sampling in Broad Creek, between the Laurel Park downstream to the gravel pit above Bethel, in following days did not result in any more snakeheads. That was the good news. Additional electrofishing was conducted in Horseys Pond to determine if the fish were present there. Again no more snakeheads were found.

The bad news is that snakeheads become very inactive and can burrow into the mud during periods of cooling water temps. Steve Minkinen of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the national snakehead Project Leader, said that fall surveys are less successful due to this burrowing habit. He has suggested sampling this spring in the upper Broad Creek to better assess the status of the snakehead in Delaware waters.

There is a small possibility that snakeheads could traverse the Chesapeake Bay; it is also possible that someone brought the fish to Delaware. This is against Federal law besides subjecting our biggest bass fishery to competition by this invasive species.

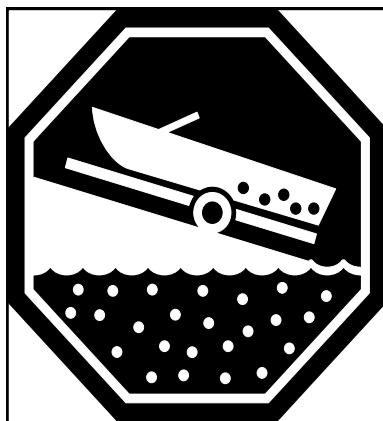
Dr. Joe Love of MD DNR recently released a short publication

about largemouth bass and northern snakeheads living together. Both species live in similar habitats, prefer to hang in structure, and feed on fish. They will also feed on each other's young. In a poor recruitment area such as the Nanticoke, this could have a big impact on the largemouth bass population.

One of Joe's most important findings was that largemouth bass biomass increases if northern snakehead biomass is removed. The corollary of this is that largemouth bass may decrease if snakeheads are added. There is limited habitat and limited forage within any system so adding another species to the community can impact similar species that are already present. Although snakeheads mainly feed on soft-rayed fishes such as herring, they also feed on white perch and spiny-rayed fish such as sunfish. Largemouth bass feed on crayfish and sunfish but also feed, especially in the Nanticoke, on young herring. The potential for food competition is high.



We will be out this spring looking for snakeheads but hoping not to find them. If you catch one, please contact us immediately and keep the fish and freeze it. Future bass anglers will thank you for it. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call. Our staff is limited so the additional, educated eyes on the waters of Delaware are extremely valuable to help protect our natural resources.



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Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.

[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)



Fisheries Section  
4876 Hay Point Landing Rd  
Smyrna De 19977

On the Web

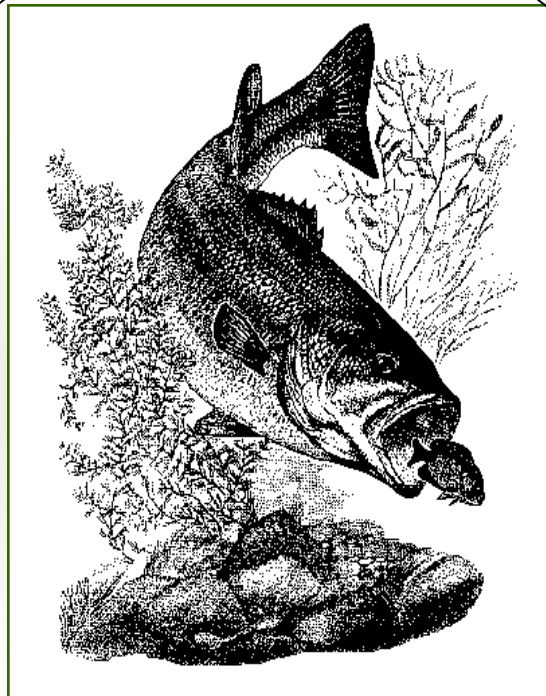
[www.fw.delaware.gov/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

## Angler Survey of 2009

The first statewide (mail) survey of DE anglers based on the FIN number database began in Nov. 2009. After two mailings to nearly 7800 anglers, just over 2000 responses were received. These consisted of both resident and non-resident anglers. For the first time since the periodic surveys began in 1978, resident anglers age 65 and over and 7-day (non-resident) license-holders were also contacted. The data are now being analyzed, but some early results are available. Lums Pond supported the most fishing trips in the ponds followed closely by Hearn and Records Ponds. Non-resident fishing pressure in the ponds is very low overall; less than 3% of pond trips were made by non-residents.

A few ponds however, had higher non-resident use. Noxontown Pond, Garrison Lake, Trap Pond, and Killens Pond had 5 to 6 percent use by non-residents.

Residents age 65 and older accounted for over one-third of the fishing trips on our public ponds and reported about 36 percent of the catch.



Historically the Nanticoke and Brandywine Rivers were the top two as far as number of fishing trips. That is still true but the Nanticoke has greatly outpaced the Brandywine. That is undoubtedly due to bass fishing. Most of you know that the number of bass boats on the Nanticoke/Broad Creek complex is much greater than in years past.

Tagging studies have also shown that some fish are caught and reported up to four times. A fish reported four times is estimated to have been caught and released about eight times as only about half of the tagged fish caught are ever reported. Catch and release fishing is incredibly important on the Nanticoke River system especially.

The number of access sites has also increased since I first started working on the Nanticoke in 1978 with Roy Miller and even with my own work in 1989. Phillips Landing used to be the only game in town. We were thrilled when we were allowed to use the Broad Creek campground ramp. Now many options are available including the newest access site in Laurel. If you haven't been by it yet, check it out - nice ramp and parking available. We have used it several times with the electrofishing boat. Our boat is slow so that by using the Broad Creek ramp, we can cut an hour off our travel time to the upper Broad. Check it out.